

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1 to 11. (Canceled).

12. (Currently Amended) A method for operating a fuel metering system of a motor vehicle during a starting phase of an internal combustion engine to increase a fuel pressure in at least one high pressure area to an operating pressure, a fuel being delivered by at least one supply pump to the at least one high pressure area and being injected by at least one fuel injector from the high pressure area directly into at least one combustion chamber, the method comprising:

detecting a pressure in the high pressure area using at least one sensor; [[and]]

adjusting the pressure in the high pressure area using at least one pressure regulating element; and

~~wherein~~ setting a limit to a rate of change in pressure in the high pressure area over time is limited as a function of a specified value for an injection quantity error caused by pressure changes during a lag between a first time at which a fuel injection time is computed and a second time at which fuel injection begins.

13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, wherein permissible pressure gradient values for the high pressure area are stored in speed-dependent and load-dependent characteristic maps.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, wherein the limitation of the rate of the change in pressure in the high pressure area is specified for a time period between two rail pressure gradient computations.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, wherein the limitation of the rate of the change in pressure in the high pressure area is determined as a function of at least one of the following:

- i) an instantaneous pressure in the high pressure area;
- ii) a sampling rate of a pressure measurement in the high pressure area;
- iii) an engine speed; and
- iv) characteristic data of the supply pump.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 12, further comprising:
determining potential limiting values of a change in pressure in the high pressure area over time using at least two different techniques;
determining a minimum value of the potential limiting values by a comparison operation; and
selecting the minimum value as the limit for the change in pressure in the high pressure area over time.

17. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium having stored thereon a computer program for controlling a fuel metering system of an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle, the computer program including a sequence of instructions ~~[[being]]~~ executable on a control unit of an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle, the ~~and including a sequence of instructions which, when executed, cause the control unit to perform a method for controlling a fuel metering system of the internal combustion engine during a starting phase of the internal combustion engine to increase a fuel pressure in at least one high pressure area of the fuel metering system to an operating pressure, the method comprising:~~

detecting a pressure in ~~[[a]]~~ the high pressure area of the fuel metering system using at least one sensor;

adjusting the pressure in the high pressure area using at least one pressure regulating element; and

setting a limit to limiting a rate of change in pressure in the high pressure area over time as a function of a specified value for an injection quantity error caused by pressure changes during a lag between a first time at which a fuel injection time is computed and a second time at which fuel injection begins.

Claim 18. (Canceled).

19. (Currently Amended) A control unit for operating a fuel metering system of a motor vehicle, a fuel being delivered by at least one supply pump to at least one high pressure area and being injected by at least one fuel injector from the high pressure area directly into at least one combustion chamber, the control unit comprising:

a processor for controlling, during a starting phase of an internal combustion engine, performance of a method to increase a fuel pressure in the high pressure area to an operating pressure, the controlling including:

- detection of pressure in the high pressure area using at least one sensor;
- adjustment of at least one pressure regulating element for adjusting the pressure in the high pressure area; and

- a setting of a limit to a rate ~~limitation~~ of a change in pressure in the high pressure area ~~over time~~ as a function of a specified value for an injection quantity error caused by pressure changes during a lag between a first time at which a fuel injection time is computed and a second time at which fuel injection begins.

20. (Currently Amended) A fuel metering system for an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle, comprising:

- at least one high pressure area;
- at least one supply pump for delivering fuel to the at least one high pressure area;
- at least one fuel injector for direct injection of the fuel from the high pressure area into at least one combustion chamber of the engine;
- at least one sensor for detecting a pressure in the high pressure area; and
- at least one pressure regulating element for adjusting the pressure in the high pressure area;

wherein, for increasing, during a starting phase of the internal combustion engine, a fuel pressure in the high pressure area to an operating pressure, a limit to a rate of [[the]] change in pressure in the high pressure area ~~over time~~ is set limited as a function of a specified value for an injection quantity error caused by pressure changes during a lag between a first time at which a fuel injection time is computed and a second time at which fuel injection begins.